

Government of Pakistan
Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Division
Press Release

PM grants need based Ehsaas scholarships to leaders of tomorrow



March 2, 2020 – Islamabad: Prime Minister Imran Khan granted Ehsaas undergraduate scholarships for academic year 2019-20 to the first batch of deserving students in Islamabad. Addressing the scholarship award ceremony, the Prime Minister reiterated that Pakistan's biggest asset is the country's students and Ehsaas scholarships for deserving undergraduate students is another step towards the realization of the goal of a welfare state based on the pattern of state of Madina.

Citing the example of Holy Prophet (PBUH), the premier said: "This is what happened in Madina. The state took responsibility for the poor, even though it was weak. They had no means, and no money but they had Ehsaas. Further, the state of Madina also understood the importance of education, he said. "When the Battle of Badr took place, according to the customs at the time, war prisoners would be released for ransom. But the state decided that the prisoners would be released if they taught at least 10 people how to read and write. "You have to understand how forward thinking this approach was. This was the reason that for the next few centuries, the world's top scientists were Muslims," he said.

Aiming to provide higher education opportunities for 200,000 students (50% girls) coming from underprivileged backgrounds, the 4-year Ehsaas undergraduate scholarship program is the largest ever need based scholarship program in the history of our country. The scholarship offers full-tuition fee and a living stipend (Rs.4,000 per month) for bright yet

disadvantaged students to earn an undergraduate degree at any of the 119 public sector universities across Pakistan (including GB and AJK) recognized by the Higher Education Commission (HEC). As part of the policy, the scholarship support will be continued to awardees throughout the course of their undergraduate degree program based on their academic performance.

Earlier, speaking at the award ceremony, Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Social Protection and Poverty Alleviation, Dr. Sania Nishtar said, "The scholarships will be awarded on transparency and merit to help the deserving students get higher education."

During the ceremony, the Prime Minister distributed scholarships amongst the selected students. Shafqat Mahmood, Federal Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training, said, "Provision of undergraduate scholarships to brilliant students from marginalized families is the best way forward to reduce poverty across Pakistan."

Thanking the government about the paradigm shift in the scholarship policy, Chairman HEC, Dr. Tariq Banuri shared the operational modalities of this largest ever need based scholarship program in the country to benefit needy and talented students.

In strategic partnership with HEC- the implementing agency of this extensive higher education program, Ehsaas will award 50,000 scholarships every year to students with family income below the poverty threshold (less than Rs. 45,000). Similarly, 50% allocation for girls and special allocation of quota for differently abled indicates an inclusive approach of the government to drive the progressive agenda of human capital development that is the third pillar of Ehsaas. To pave the way for this, the government will spend a total of Rs. 24 billion for Ehsaas scholarships over a period of four years which stands highest in the history of Pakistan.

The Ehsaas undergraduate scholarships initiative was officially launched by the PM on Nov 4, 2019. Following the launch, an online application portal was opened by HEC to invite applications from needy students for the academic year 2019-20. Till Dec 24, 2019 that was the closing date, 132, 192 online applications (49,841 girls) were submitted online. The selection of 50,000 students for year 2019-20 is currently ongoing and will be completed across 119 universities by 31 March 2020. The HEC portal is currently closed and will be opened for the next phase of applications (academic year 2020-21) by mid-June 2020.

This scholarship initiative is part of the overarching Ehsaas framework that is the government of Pakistan's multidimensional poverty alleviation program. The human capital development lies at the core of Ehsaas agenda. These Ehsaas scholarships will boost education in the country, reduce poverty, and will contribute towards inclusive development.